

## Federal Vaccines For Children (VFC) Program in the State of South Carolina Frequently Asked Questions

### General Questions

**1. Q: Why did the SC DHEC Immunization Division transition from VAFAC to VFC Only?**

A: Due to budget constraints, the SC DHEC Immunization Division now has two vaccine programs as the funds previously available to assist the underinsured have been reduced. In South Carolina the two distinct vaccine programs are the VFC program (Federal) and the SC State vaccine program (State).

**2. Q: What is “VFC vaccine”? What is “private vaccine”?**

A: **VFC vaccine** is vaccine purchased with Federal funds and provided at no cost to providers to be administered at no cost for the vaccine to eligible children.

**Private vaccine** is vaccine purchased by a health care provider to administer to individuals who are not federally vaccine (VFC) eligible.

**3. Q: What is the “administration” charge for VFC vaccine?**

A: The VFC Program allows a non-Medicaid administration fee up to [\\$20.16](#) per vaccine. The provider should not deny VFC vaccine to an eligible child because of the parent’s inability to pay the administration fee. Contact the Medicaid program for questions regarding billing for Medicaid patients.

**4. . Q: Can anyone complete the enrollment agreements for the vaccine programs?**

A: No. Only a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathy (DO) can complete the enrollment forms in SCI PAS. This person is considered the ESA. An Electronic Signature Authority (ESA) has the legal right to electronically sign these documents. The email associated with the ESA must belong to the ESA as this is the legal signature agreeing to the terms of the Federal Vaccines for Children Program.

**5. Q: How should NEW providers (those who have not participated in the VFC program) enroll in the VFC Only Program?**

A: Providers must review and submit the required documents to enroll in the VFC program through the SCI PAS online system. An enrollment visit will be required as part of the enrollment process for new providers. *Due to new VFC Requirements from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), new providers must record storage temperatures in their vaccine storage units for 30 days prior to receipt of publicly funded vaccines. Temperature must be recorded with a certified calibrated thermometer.* Once the enrollment is complete and approved, a Provider Identification Number (PIN) will be assigned to the new provider site.

**6. Q: Once the enrollment forms are completed and submitted to the SC DHEC Immunization Division through SCI PAS, how will we be notified that we are successfully enrolled in the new program?**

A: Processing of the enrollment forms will only take approximately 3 to 5 business days excluding holidays and weekends. As mentioned, new providers will need to have an enrollment visit as part of the enrollment process; therefore, this may take more than two weeks for these providers.

Private providers will receive a emailed portable document format (pdf) of the VFC Vaccine Order Form (DHEC 1117) customized for their practice once the enrollment is complete.

DHEC Clinics will receive a portable document format (pdf) of the VFC Program DHEC Clinic VFC Vaccine Order Form (DHEC 1130) customized for their clinic once the enrollment is complete. . *if you have not received an order form within two weeks of submitting the enrollment forms (new providers should be contacted within two weeks to set up an enrollment visit), please contact the Division of Immunization at 800-277-4687 or [immunize@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:immunize@dhec.sc.gov).*

**7. Q: How do I send the enrollment forms to the SC DHEC Immunization Division?**

A: Enrollment into the VFC Program may be done through the South Carolina Immunization Provider Access System (SCI PAS). Three forms must be completed and submitted to the SC DHEC Immunization Division in SCI PAS. The three forms are (1) VFC Program: Provider Enrollment Agreement (DHEC 1144), (2) VFC Provider Profile (DHEC 1145), and (3) VFC Provider Vaccine Management and Disaster Recovery Plan (DHEC 1225). ***The forms cannot be mailed or faxed.***

**8. Q: Will we have to re-enroll after a certain period of time?**

A: Yes. Providers will be required to re-enroll annually by June 15<sup>th</sup> of each year. A provider's understanding of how the VFC program works is critical to maintaining the integrity of the VFC Program (provider includes all appropriate office staff). CDC requires this enrollment annually.

**9. Q: Where can I find information regarding FQHC's and RHC's in my area?**

A: For FQHCs, go to the website for the SC Primary Health Care Association at <http://www.scphca.org/> For RHCs, contact the DHEC Office of Primary Care at 803-898-0766 for further information.

## **Eligibility**

### **1. Q: Who is eligible for VFC vaccine?**

A: Children who are 18 years of age or younger and meet at least one of the following categories:

- Are an American Indian or Alaska Native
- Are enrolled in Medicaid
- Have no health insurance
- Are underinsured

**Underinsured children are eligible to receive VFC vaccine only through an Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or Rural Health Clinic (RHC). . .**

**By Federal law, underinsured children are NOT eligible in any other VFC Provider site.**

### **2. Q: What is the definition of “underinsured”?**

A: For the purpose of the VFC program, a child with health insurance would be considered “underinsured” and eligible for VFC vaccine if their insurance policy:

- Does not include coverage for vaccines,
- Covers only selected vaccines (VFC-eligible for non-covered vaccines only),

Some insurance plans limit the coverage to a specific number of provider visits annually. If the child’s insurance policy will not cover the cost of vaccine(s) after the child has exceeded the number of provider visits, the child can be considered “underinsured”.

### **3. Q: If a child is underinsured and the provider is not an FQHC, RHC or DHEC clinic, can the child receive vaccine?**

A: The child can receive private stock vaccine and be billed for that vaccine OR referred to an FQHC, RHC or DHEC clinic to receive VFC vaccine.

**If you are not an FQHC or RHC and wish to see the underinsured in your medical home then, you must enroll in the SC State Vaccine Program.**

### **4. Q: Are all children enrolled in Medicaid programs automatically VFC eligible?**

A: Yes, all children under 18 years of age or younger who are covered by Medicaid are considered VFC eligible because of their Medicaid status. For the purposes of the VFC program, both terms, “Medicaid enrolled” and “Medicaid eligible”, are equivalent and refer to children who have health insurance covered by a state Medicaid program.

**5. Q: Are all children who have Medicaid as a secondary insurance covered by VFC?**

A: Yes, all children 18 years of age or younger who have Medicaid as a secondary insurance are eligible for VFC vaccine. The state Medicaid agency will pay the claim for the administration fee and seek reimbursement from the primary insurance. Medicaid billing questions should be directed to the Medicaid program.

**6. Q: If an American Indian or Alaska Native child has insurance that covers vaccines (full or partial), is that child still eligible for VFC vaccine?**

A: Yes, American Indian/Alaska Native children under 18 years of age or younger eligible to participate in the VFC program regardless of insurance coverage.

**7. Q: Are children who have health insurance but whose insurance covers only a portion of the cost of one or more vaccines eligible for the VFC program (e.g., the insurance covers 80% of the cost of the vaccine(s) and the parent must pay the remaining 20%)?**

A: No, even if the parent must share in any portion of the cost of the vaccine(s), these children are considered to be insured for the purposes of the VFC program and **are not eligible** to receive VFC vaccine. The child must be given private stock vaccine.

**8. Q: Are children who have health insurance that requires a co-pay or deductible (even if the deductible has not yet been met) eligible for the VFC program?**

A: No, these children are considered to be insured for the purposes of the VFC program and **are not eligible** to receive VFC vaccine. The child must be given private stock vaccine.

**9. Q: If a family has a medical savings account or health savings account, does that account affect a child's VFC eligibility?**

A: Individuals covered by medical savings accounts or health savings accounts must also have high deductible health plan coverage. Therefore, such individuals are **insured** and must be given private stock vaccine.

**10. Q: If a child's insurance policy includes coverage (full or partial) of vaccines if administered by an "in-network" provider, but does not cover vaccines if administered by an "out-of-network" provider, is that child eligible for VFC vaccine with an "out-of-network" provider?**

A: No, these children are considered to be insured for the purposes of the VFC program and **are not eligible** to receive VFC vaccine. This child must be given private stock vaccine by the out-of-network provider. If an in-network provider serves this child, they must also use private stock vaccine but have the ability to bill the child's insurance to maximize their insurance benefits.

**11. Q: If an eligible child starts a vaccine series (such as Hepatitis B) at age 18, can the series be completed using VFC vaccine after the child turns 19?**

A: No, children are eligible to participate in the VFC program **only through 18 years of age**, regardless of the child's immunization status (series completed or series not completed) when they age out of VFC. Subsequent doses after turning 19 years of age, requires the administration of private stock vaccine (not VFC vaccine).

**12. Q: How often do providers have to screen for patient VFC eligibility?**

A: Providers must screen and document eligibility status at each visit for VFC eligibility in which vaccine will be administered. See VFC Program Protocol (section C) and VFC Eligibility Flow Charts.

**13. Q: What should a provider do if a patient states that they “do not know” if their insurance covers the vaccine?**

A: Administer private stock vaccine and bill insurance. Parents should be encouraged to contact their insurance to determine benefits or the provider may do this for the parents.

**14. Q: What are some examples of VFC Fraud and Abuse?**

- Providing VFC vaccine to non-VFC eligible children
- Selling or otherwise misdirecting VFC vaccine
- Billing a patient or third party for VFC-funded vaccine
- Charging more than the established maximum regional charge for administration (\$20.16) of a VFC-funded vaccine to a federally vaccine-eligible child
- Denying VFC-eligible children VFC-funded vaccine because of the parents' inability to pay for the administration fee
- Failing to implement provider enrollment requirements of the VFC program
- Failing to screen for and document eligibility status at every visit
- Failing to maintain VFC records and comply with the other requirements of the VFC program
- Failing to fully account for VFC-funded vaccine
- Failing to properly store and handle VFC vaccine
- Ordering VFC vaccine in quantities or patterns that do not match the provider's profile or otherwise over-ordering of VFC doses of vaccine
- Waste of VFC vaccine

**15. Q: Does the provider have to maintain an inventory of private stock vaccine?**

A: If the provider sees privately insured children, the clinic must have private stock vaccine. Private stock and VFC vaccines must be labeled and stored separately. Following VFC Storage and Handling guidelines for all vaccine will also ensure private stock vaccine safe and effective when administered.

**16. Q:** How do I contact the Immunization Division with questions or concerns?

*A. Please contact the SC DHEC Immunization Division SCI PAS HELP DESK for questions specific to SCI PAS online system at 866-439-4082 or VFC program for questions specific to the VFC program at 800-277-4687 or [Immunize@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:Immunize@dhec.sc.gov). if you have not received an order form within two weeks of submitting the enrollment forms (new providers should be contacted within two weeks to set up an enrollment visit).*